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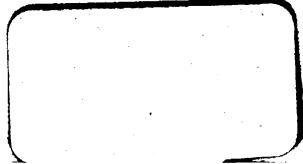
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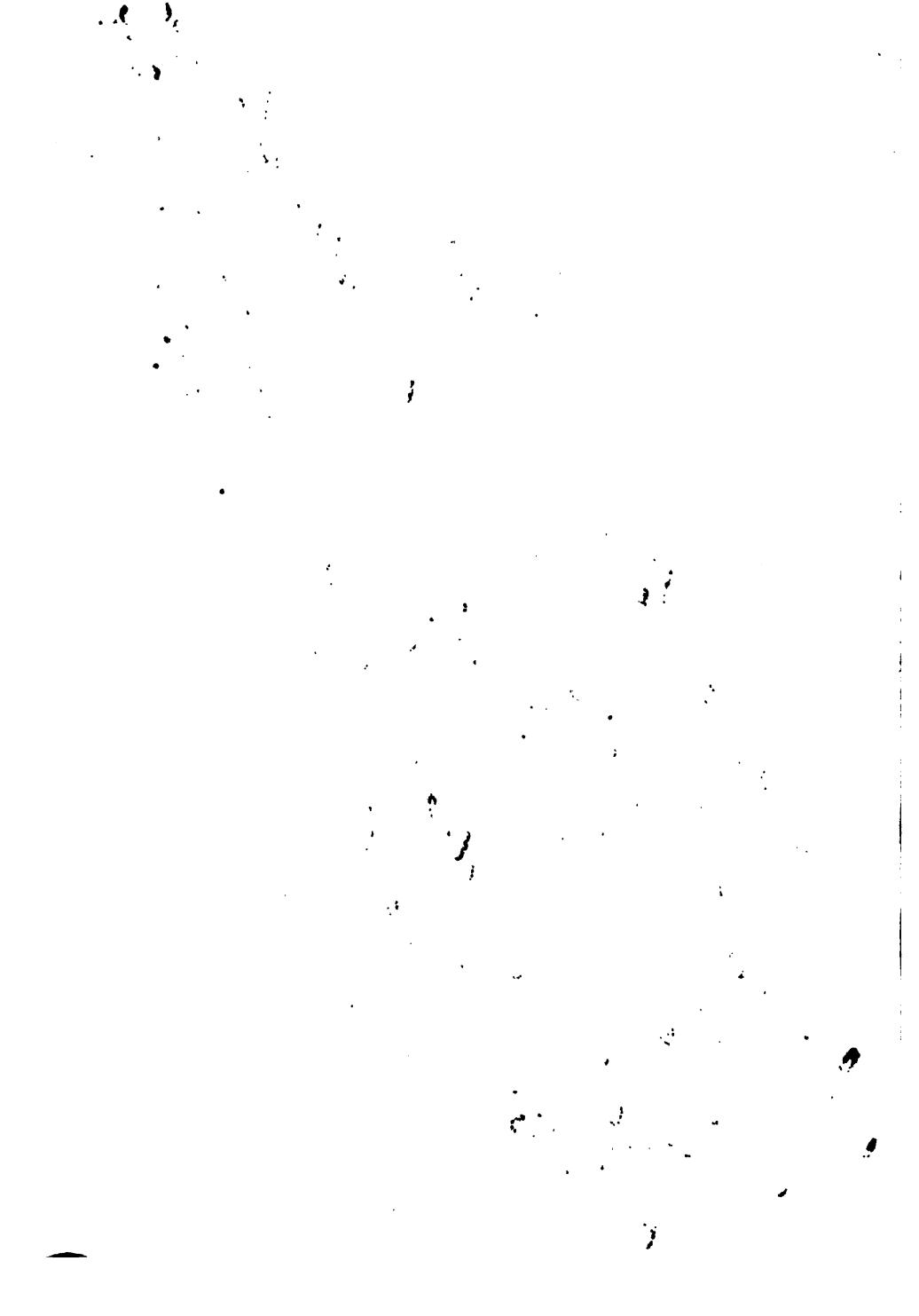
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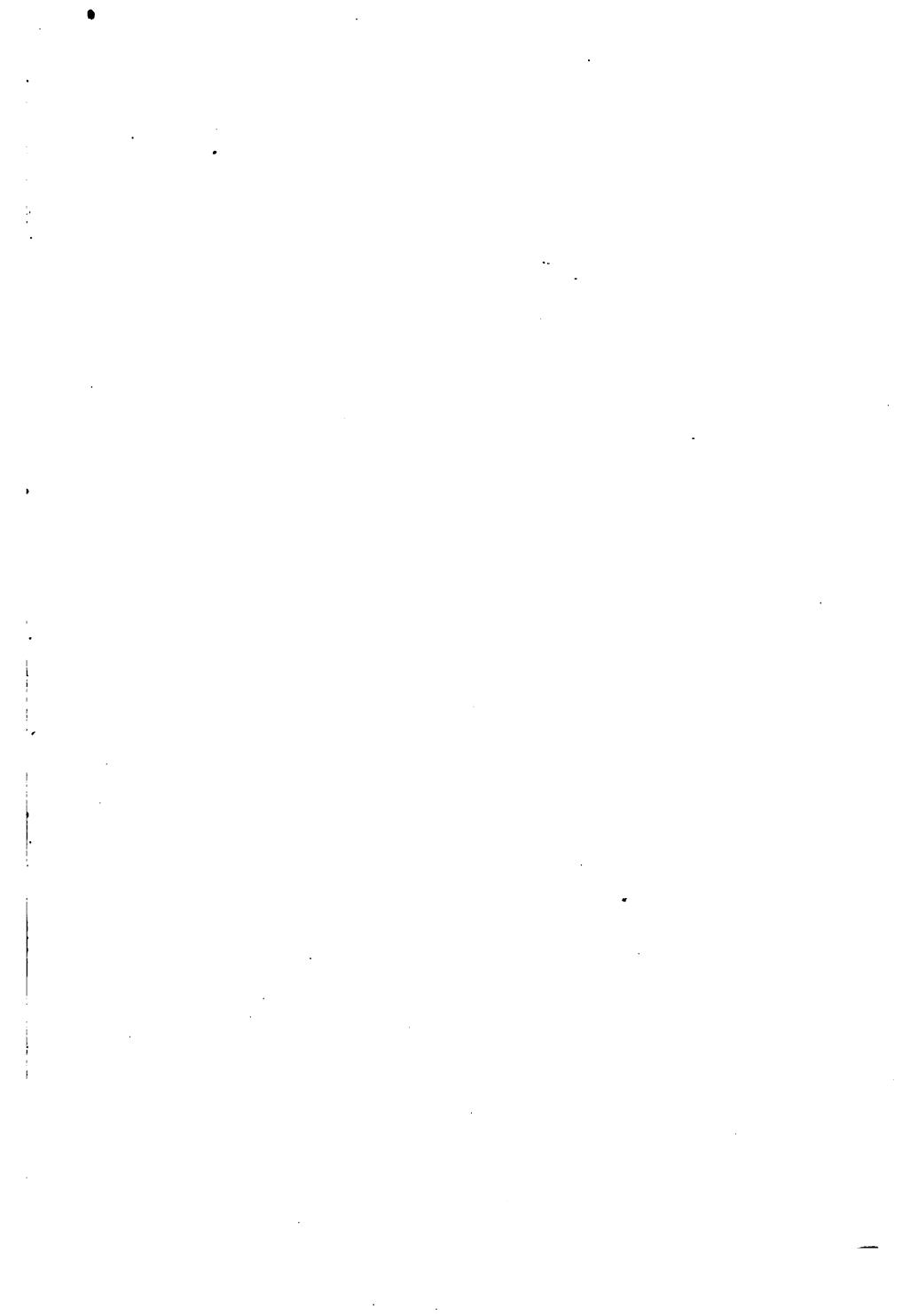
28-1



"what
was once a future ideal.
"The "is" embraces what was once the future, and it is
"what exists now as a mere matter of course." —
Gibbons

(Gibbons)
NAS











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JANET

OR

THE CHRISTMAS STOCKINGS

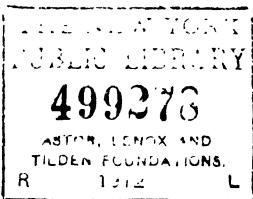
BY

LOUISE ÉLISE GIBBONS

Author of "Truth" and Other Stories



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JANET

I

IN the doorway of an old tenement-house, far down in the slums of New York, two women were standing, their heads close together as they gossiped about the passers-by.

A young girl—she might have been thirteen—tripped along the sidewalk, kicking her legs out in front of her as she went, so that she could see her stockings.

Her odd movements caught the women's eyes, and they asked each other what could be the cause of them.

"I never see her act like that before. Puttin' on such airs ! Dear! dear! Saw ye ever the likes of it ?"

"Oh, see her new stockings !" said the younger

woman. "What mighty fine ones! Did you ever?"

"I doubt she came by them in no good way," said the other. "Janet, young un! See here!"

The child stopped, holding up her tattered gown to show her pretty stockings. "Who give you *them?*" cried the woman who had called her.

The girl replied quietly, "'T was the Bishop give me 'em."

At this the women exclaimed in chorus, "The Bishop! That's a fine tale! How 'd you know it was the Bishop?"

Janet said Roy, the newsboy, told her; and the women asked her, "How is it your father has n't got hold of 'em? He 'd sell 'em for drink inside of a minute."

"Oh, I only wears 'em on the street," said Janet, "and I takes 'em off an' hides 'em before I go home."

The women begged her to tell them all about it, and settled themselves comfortably to hear the story.

The girl's tale ran thus: one day a lot of children were dancing on the sidewalk to the tune of an old organ-grinder, and she began dancing with them. Roy then came by with his newspapers, and, putting them down on a step, seized her round the waist and whirled her off among the little children. He stopped suddenly, for a gentleman who was passing wanted a paper. The girl was overheated with her dancing, and began to fan herself with one of Roy's papers; Roy said afterwards her eyes were as bright as stars.

The gentleman asked her name, and where she lived; and when she told him, he said, "Janet, if you will come to yonder church," pointing to the steeple, "at seven o'clock on Christmas night, I will give you something to take home with you." Then he paid Roy for the paper, and gave the change to Janet, saying with a smile, "This will buy some refreshments for the ball."

"Thank you, sir," she said. "I am very hungry. I have had nothing to eat since yesterday noon."

At this the gentleman did n't smile any more, but looked sad. "Why did you dance, then?" he said.

Roy spoke before she had a chance to answer: "Sir, Janet was hungry and cold, and that was the best way to get warm." The gentleman walked away, and she could see him rub the back of his hand across his eyes. She asked Roy what his name was, and he said he did n't know, but it was the Bishop.

She bought something to eat with the money, and divided it with Roy, and he ran off to sell his papers. The organ-grinder went on his way, and the children stopped dancing.

So on Christmas night, Janet went early to the big church, as the Bishop had told her to do. When she got inside the door, she stood still with wonder, for there was a great tree, as big as an out-door tree, all lighted with little candles from the floor to the top, and all over it were hanging sparkling toys. And when she came near to it, she saw the Bishop standing by it.

She did not think he would know her again, but he smiled and said, "Janet, I was expecting you." And then he took a stick with a hook on the end of it, and, reaching over the heads of some fine ladies who were arranging things at the foot of the tree, he took the stockings down and put them in her hands. Then he put his white hands on her head, and said, "God bless you, my child! Remember, keep yourself pure and clean to your life's end." Each stocking had a silver dollar in the toe, and was filled with candy, and tied around the top with a blue ribbon to keep the candy in.

"See!" said Janet, as she told the story, "I tie the ribbon on each leg to keep me from getting out." She lifted the ragged gown to show the ribbon garters. She said she skipped out of the great big church, hugging the stockings close to her and covering them with a bit of her shawl to hide her treasure from the people she passed.

"Don't you know such a fine bishop's name?" asked one of the women.

"No," said the child, "but Roy said he was

the good Bishop who stays down here with us, and don't go away frolicking. And now I must go to see Roy. There he is calling his extras at the corner."

"Well, I never!" said one of the women, as the child skipped away. "She seems to make friends, don't she? She and that boy are awful fond of each other; and now there's this Bishop!"

"Well," said the other, "Janet is a pretty girl, with her dark eyes, and her hair always braided in one long plait down her back—and even if she is in rags, her hair is always tidy."

"Her father sells everything that people give her—it's a wonder he don't cut off her hair and sell that. Well, the girl has a white skin, and a pretty mouth, and a straight nose just like her mother's. She don't look and she don't act like as if she was born and raised here among us poor folks."

"That she don't; and she's such a little mite for her age, with those little hands and feet. You would n't take her to be fourteen, would you, now?"

While the women were talking her over, Janet went to find Roy, who stood at the corner shivering with the cold, with his papers under his arm.

"Hello, Roy!" said she, "see my beautiful stockings! That Bishop gave 'em to me off the tree, and they was full of candy and money!" Coming close to him, she said in a whisper, "Here 's some for you!" and she took a little paper bag full of candy from under her ragged shawl where she had hidden it.

"Oh, Roy," she said, "it was the finest tree you ever did see! And the Bishop gave me the stockings his own self, and when he gave them to me he put his hands on my head, and what do you think he said? He said, 'God bless you, my child! Remember to keep yourself pure and clean to the end of your life.' And when he was a-saying it, he looked up at a sugar boy with shiny wings that was hanging on the top of the tree."

The boy and girl parted at the corner, he to sell his papers through the cold and the mire of the slums, and she to go to her poor, wretched home.

She mounted the rickety stairs of an old tenement-house, up to the top floor, where, in one small garret, the whole family lived. In one corner of the room was an old ragged straw mattress, on which the father, mother, and baby slept. The baby was asleep now, the father was drinking in a saloon near by. In another corner was a pile of straw where Janet and her sister Bessie slept; and in yet another, on a heap of rags and paper, lay two pretty little boys, sound asleep, unconscious of the fact that they were cold and hungry. One could see, in spite of rags and dirt, that they were like cherubs, with their sunny curls.

The poor mother sat by the feeble light of a candle, the wick burned nearly down to the bottle which served for a candlestick. She was sewing on a coarse garment that she wanted to finish, in order to buy bread for the children with the few pennies she would get for it.

All that any of them had eaten that day was some candy that Janet had slyly put in their mouths, not letting them know where she kept it.

Janet went to her mother, the poor, tired, sick woman, and, bidding her open her mouth, she fed her with sweet chocolate and brought her a drink of water.

Then she sat down by the suffering woman, and hugged her poor cold feet to her heart, trying to warm them. In a low voice, so as not to waken the sleeping children, she gave her mother a description of the beautiful tree, and how the Bishop had given her the stockings himself.

"I take them off and hide them when I get home," she said, "so father will not sell them; and the candy I hid last night under my pile of straw—that's how I had these good chocolates for you now."

And then she repeated again to her mother the words of the good Bishop, "Remember, keep yourself pure and clean to the end of your life."

The mother swallowed hard, as though her throat hurt her, and she became deadly pale.

"Oh, mother!" said the child, "the Bishop has made me feel so happy—and even this old

garret looks better than it did, because I am so happy."

The mother said: "I feel peaceful and happy too while I listen to you. You make my thoughts go back to when I was a little girl. I remember a hymn I used to sing in Sunday-school." And in a broken way, gasping for breath, she repeated the last two lines:

" Cover my—defenceless head
With the shadow—of—Thy wing."

She leaned back, raising her eyes, as though she could see the angels looking down upon her, though to the outward eye only the rough, weather-stained rafters were above her.

Janet fell asleep at her mother's feet. The woman's head fell forward on the unfinished work. The candle burned down, and the fallen wick spluttered in the grease.

Heavy steps ascended the stairs. An unsteady hand opened the door; and a large man fell heavily to the floor. It was the drunken father, returning

from the saloon. . . . The gray streaks of early dawn came into the dingy garret, and revealed the face of the dead man.

A few hours later the body was removed. The two dollars the Bishop had given Janet was paid out for back rent, so the poor woman and her children were allowed to stay in the wretched room a little longer. Janet took her mother's work back to the shop, which was some distance away. She trudged through the snow, cold, wet, and hungry.

When she returned late in the afternoon, climbed the rickety stairs, and entered the room, she stood speechless in the middle of the floor.

The sun was shining through the broken panes of the one window in the garret, and its rays fell like a shower of gold all over the child as she stood there, crowning her head as with a halo. But she heeded not its beauty. She stood there, struck dumb with astonishment.

There was absolutely nothing and no one in the room but herself! Father, mother, children, mattress, straw—all gone—the room utterly empty!

She knew not how long she had stood there, speechless in her misery, when she heard steps ascending the stairs. Some one fumbled in the dark hall for the latch, and finally opened the door. Two burly men entered, and asked Janet who she was. From them she learned that the people who had lived there were gone, that they had the room to rent, and would take the key at six o'clock, by which time she must be gone.

When they went out, she did not move from the sunshine. A child of the slums, she was used to rough men and women, and was not afraid of them. But she was stunned with this new trouble—with her absolute loneliness. Where were her people? What did it all mean? Where should she go to find them?

Light steps came swiftly up the stairs, and after a gentle knock the door was opened. It was Roy who stepped into the spot of fading sunshine beside her.

"Oh, Janet!" said he.

"Oh, Roy!" was all she could answer.

And the boy and girl stood crowned with the golden halo, in absolute silence.

At last, as the sun's rays were passing away, Roy spoke:

"Janet, they 're all gone! Taken away while you went with the work. Janet, the baby was dead in the night."

The child said but one word, "Froze?"

"No," said Roy, "it was the diphtery. And your mother had it, too. Somebody told on 'em, an' so the Board of Health sent in a jiffy, an' a great black ambulance came an' took her an' all the children, and then some men came and took everything out and burned it all, and did something to the room. I came and looked at them awhile, but they sent me away. I see the ambulance drive off. I was close to it."

"Where?" Janet gasped.

"I don't know," said the boy.

Again there was silence. The children of the slums, born in poverty, sorrow, and disgrace, do not cry. Life is too stern a reality.

Then Roy spoke in a whisper, as if in his untutored mind he felt that in the presence of such sorrow a loud word would be a sacrilege—“Janet!”

She turned and looked him in the face. He was pale and trembling, and the words came painfully, as if he feared to hurt her any more.

“Janet—when they took your mother out of here, she was dead. I seed her face. I did n’t say nothin’, but I know she was dead, and I come now to tell you. But I wish I had n’t—you look so white and scared.”

The only sound was a choking gasp from the poor child.

Roy took her hand in his. “Janet, I love you! Don’t look so white! It scares me. If anything happened to you it would kill me. You’re all I’ve got in the world. Don’t look so—I can’t stand it. I’ll take care of you. I earn a good bit of money some days. I’ll work hard, and then when we are older——”

“What?” said the girl simply.

" Why, then we 'll get the good Bishop to marry us. There now, Janet, be a good girl and come away, before the men come back, for I saw them goin' out in the street, an' if they catch us here when they come for the key, they 'll say we have it too, and they 'll take us away in that ugly black ambulance."

So she let him lead her out of that garret so full of memories, down the dark rickety stairs, into the cold street. They were homeless, friendless orphans, starting out on life's stormy sea, hungry, cold, forsaken.

They walked hand in hand until they were several blocks away, in another part of the slums, where Janet had never been. Then, standing in the shelter of a doorway, they looked at each other for some time in silence. At last Roy spoke :

" Janet, dear—I don't know where to take you."

" Where do you go, Roy, at night ? " said she.

" Oh, anywhere! Sometimes us boys sleeps in boxes, and sometimes they have straw in 'em, and

more times not. But you see, Janet, that won't do for the likes of you."

He thought in silence for a moment. "Let me see," he said. "I've got ten cents in my pocket. That ought to lodge you for one night—but where? Oh, I know! Now, Janet, listen to me, and do just what I tell you. I'm going to take you to an old apple-woman near here, and don't you open your mouth about the dipthery, and don't say nothin' 'bout where you lived or that you had any people, nor nothin', 'cause if you do nobody'll let us come near 'em; and I'll do what I can with the cross old apple-woman. She sort o' takes to me, an' she gives me specked apples for runnin' errands for her."

So they went on until they came to the apple-stand, over which a torch was burning.

"Aunt Betsy," said Roy, "here's a poor little girl that can't be left out on the street to freeze. Won't you let the kid sleep on your floor for to-night?"

"Now, Roy," said the old woman, "you know

you 've picked up a good-for-nothing vagabone on the street. Why don't you take her to the 'ciety ? "

" Lawks, Aunt Betsy, I don't know nothin' 'bout 'cieties, an' fore we could find one she 'd be froze stiff, so if you won't take her in, she 'll have to lie down any place and die. I 've got ten cents in my pocket, and I 'll give it to you if you 'll keep the kid to-night."

" Oh, you 've got ten cents, have you ? Well, all right, she can sleep on a bit of a mat on my floor. And where might you be goin' ? "

" Well," said he, " I 've got to sell some extrys late to-night, and I 'll scare up a box to turn in somewheres. Say," he added, " she 's awful hungry. If you 'll give her a bit of grub, I 'll pay you for it to-morrow when I come round, and give you a paper."

" All right, Roy, I 'll do what I kin."

So Janet was settled for the night. It is true she had to sleep on the floor and put up with some scraps to eat. But things go by comparison in this

world, and to poor, cold, starving Janet it seemed like living in a palace. Tired and worn out, she slept soundly, forgetting all her sorrows.

At last the sun rose in the glory of a new day, making the icicles sparkle in its light, and decking vines, bushes, and trees with a covering of diamonds. Dame Nature in all her glory of sparkling jewels smiled at the ladies of the world, wearing their paltry gems, as they drove to the slums to leave some little dolls, and wooden horses, and tin watches that would n't go, for starving, ragged, weary children. Dame Nature longed to teach them if they would learn of her; for, besides her beauty, she was very wise in all things. But they thought they knew, and turned a deaf ear to all her teachings.

II

WHEN Janet opened her eyes, she rubbed them hard to collect her scattered senses. After a few minutes everything came back to her, and with a heart full of sorrow she realized her desolation. Mother, brothers, sisters, all she loved—gone! Even the drunken father did not seem so bad, now she had no one to love her. Yes, there was Roy! And then her heart seemed filled to overflowing with love and gratitude to him.

She got up and asked the apple-woman if she had any chores for her to do. The old woman gave her some apples to shine and pile, with the red side up, to tempt the customers as they passed by. After this was done, she gave her one of them, and a piece of bread.

About noon Roy came along, with three cents and a paper. Then Janet remembered the thirty

cents she had been paid for her mother's sewing; she had been too full of other things to think of it before. Roy invested them in matches and pins, and started her out to sell them on the street. He thought they would be doing well if, between them, they could make enough to keep body and soul together and find some shelter at night.

Janet could make no plans. She only knew enough to do as Roy told her. A child of the slums, she had never been inside of any house but the most wretched tenement. She was ignorant of the names and use of the simplest things; so it was impossible to find a place of service for her. All she had ever seen were the windows of forlorn second-hand clothing stores, pawnshops, saloons, and factories. Roy's sale of papers took him into a wider field, so that he knew a little more about civilized life.

The old apple-woman had a mongrel dog that she had raised. He helped to guard her stand, and was a very sagacious animal. Janet and the dog became fast friends, and he would leave the

stand and follow her on her rounds. This did not please old Aunt Betsy, so she tied him to the stand. Janet and the dog, however, still continued the best of friends.

The morning that Janet had gone with her mother's work, she had dressed herself in a short skirt of her mother's and an old straw hat with a bit of black ribbon round the crown, while over her shoulders was a coarse woollen shawl. These garments were patched and mended, but they were better than the rags the poor child wore when we first saw her, dancing on the pavement.

The winter passed away, and the blessed summer, which is so much easier for the poor, came in its turn. Then Janet could sleep out-of-doors under some shed.

But the summer, too, went on its way; and now October was here, with its chilly, windy nights; and the poor child was forced to appeal to the old apple-woman again. She consented to let her stay for five cents a night, provided she would bring enough sticks for the fire, and shine the apples,

and scrub the floor. When this was done, the child, often very weary, would start out to sell her wares. Her appearance was so pitiful and appealing that although she only tried to sell to those who were nearly as poor as herself, she generally made at least enough to pay Aunt Betsy her five cents and get herself some food.

Roy was now employed by a regular newsdealer, so he made somewhat more. But their clothes were now very ragged, and Janet's feet were nearly bare.

A few days after the Christmas when Janet got the stockings, the good Bishop was called out of town. Not forgetting the poor little waif he had befriended, he gave special instructions to some of his fellow-workers to investigate the case, and if it was found worthy, to minister to the wants of the family. They endeavored to carry out his instructions, but found the miserable garret occupied by strangers who knew nothing of little Janet or her family. When they inquired of the neighbors, they were told that the whole family had died of

diphtheria, and everything that was in the room had been destroyed. Believing this report, of course they made no further effort to find poor little Janet. It seemed as if a network of misery had enveloped her, as if every avenue of relief had been blocked up.

But she still had Roy, and he had Janet, and each kept hope alive in the heart of the other. It was hope on which the two children lived day by day. It gave them sweet dreams at night, and with its beacon-light before them they were even happy in the midst of their miserable surroundings.

One day in October, Janet was trying to sell her wares along the Bowery; Roy was calling some extras on the other side, a little farther up the street.

Suddenly Janet missed the shrill voice, and looking to see what had become of him, she saw a crowd collecting about the spot where only a few minutes before she had seen Roy.

In an agony of dread, she hurried over, and, pushing her way through the crowd, followed the

men who were carrying something into a drug-store. There she found poor Roy, stretched out, bleeding, on the floor. In crossing the street, he had been knocked down by a heavy wagon, and the wheel had crushed him.

With a cry of pain, she pushed her way to him and knelt down by his side. He opened his eyes when he heard her voice. They met hers in one long gaze. Their hands clasped; his lips moved. Bending over him, she heard him whisper, "Good-by, Janet!"

Roy was gone from her, and she was left alone. She felt a warm breath on the hand that still held Roy's, and, looking down, she saw the mongrel dog, who had broken away from the apple-stand and followed her. He licked her hand, and her tears fell on his head. As she put her arms round him, she felt that he was now her only friend.

The men who carried poor Roy away pushed her roughly aside, and in a bewildered way she followed the dog, who seemed trying to lead her to

the apple-woman. When Aunt Betsy saw the dog, she gave Janet an apple for bringing him back. But Janet could not eat it, though she had had nothing all day.

She tried to tell the woman about Roy, but the words would not come. Death, to Janet, meant only the agony of separation. An hour ago, she had Roy with her—and now he was not with her. This was all there was in it to the poor child—nothing beyond, no hope of meeting again. Is it to be wondered at? Uneducated, she knew nothing but her toiling daily life. She had never been in a church but that one Christmas night, and so had learned nothing through that channel of a life beyond. When Roy's dying lips murmured "Good-by, Janet!" it was forever. No home, no books, no intelligence in her life, she was but little above the plane of her only friend, the dog.

To others, death is but the change from darkness to light. But to Janet and to the dog it meant the end. She was only so much above the

dumb brute that she could look into life a little farther, and so could suffer more.

A newsboy came along and told the apple-woman the tale Janet was unable to tell. She was shocked for the moment, for she had in her rough way liked Roy. But the hard, business part of her nature was uppermost in a little while. Here she was with this child on her hands. When Janet could sell nothing, as was often the case, Roy generally had a few cents to give her, so she had always felt that she was sure of some little pay for the poor shelter she gave the child. But now the case was different, and so she told Janet in no gentle way:

“ You must get away from here.”

“ Where ? ” asked Janet in a bewildered tone.

“ Oh, I don’t know. Go to some of the s’cie-ties, or to that Bishop as gave you them old ragged stockings you think so much of.”

“ I can’t,” said the girl, despairingly. “ I don’t know where to find him.”

“ Well,” said the woman, “ you can stay here

to-night, and I 'll give you a bit to eat in the morning before you go."

Janet cried all night for her companion, for she knew that in the morning she would not hear his voice calling the papers. Roy was gone from her —had he not said "Good-by" to her? The dog slept beside her on the floor, and tried in every way he knew to comfort her, as he felt her tears fall upon his head. While the old woman slept, he stole to the box and brought Janet an apple in his mouth. Somehow his kindness comforted her; she dried her tears and kissed his shaggy head. For his sake she ate the apple and tried, but in vain, to sleep.

Morning at length dawned, and Janet rose, her plans all made. She did the work for the old woman, ate the dry bread and drank the weak coffee that was given her, and, after tying the dog, went forth again into the cold, hard world. The dog whined so piteously when Janet kissed him, and gave her such a pleading look which she could not misunderstand, that it was impossible to resist

it. She left him tied, but in such a way that if he tried he could wriggle himself loose. She bade the old woman good-by, and thanked her for the shelter she had given her.

Roy had told her once that there was a beautiful park somewhere in the city, but it was a great way off. He told her there was lovely green grass in the park, and big, shady trees, and quiet pools of water; that the birds sang there all day long, and beautiful flowers bloomed there until almost winter-time. So the heart of the lonely waif, deserted and cast out by all mankind, turned to this beautiful spot of nature. She gathered her rags about her and started to walk to the park. She was not strong—starvation and exposure do not give strength to children—and when hope dies, the cup of sorrow runs over, and the little strength left is soon exhausted.

So she trudged along, sometimes stopping for a moment to look at what she passed, and often gazing at the food displayed in the shop-windows, for she was very hungry. Something in her wan,

white face must have appealed to a man who passed her, for he stopped and gave her a penny. She bought a roll with it, devoured it like an animal, not like a child, and then walked on.

At last a lady passed her and asked her to carry one of the many bundles she was laden with a few blocks for her. Janet rose to oblige her, for she was sitting on the steps of a house to rest. When she had carried the bundle as far as was desired, the woman gave her five cents, and, noticing how utterly miserable the child looked, asked her where she was going.

"To the park," replied Janet.

"Why, my child," she said, "that is very far away from here. You had better ride in the cars."

"But I don't know how to get the right one," said Janet.

The woman showed her the car, and with the five cents she rode and rested at the same time.

At last she came to what she knew must be the beautiful park. After she had entered it, she went

along in a timid, fearful way till at last she came to a secluded spot. She seated herself on one of the benches, but from time to time she looked over her shoulder to see if the policeman (the greatest terror of the poor) was coming.

She rested a long time under the overhanging branches of a large tree—how long she did not know. After a while she saw throngs of people on the road, driving in gay carriages. She wondered if she could cross over to the water, where Roy had told her there were boats; but she was afraid to move, for fear the police would lay hold of such a ragged-looking thing as she felt herself to be.

On this beautiful October afternoon the grass, lately mowed, looked like an emerald carpet spread down. The sunbeams and the shadows chased each other across it, as the leaves of the trees stirred in the gentle breeze. Now and then some dry, crisp leaves fell around Janet, for there had been a frost already in the early autumn.

Little Janet was very hungry, and the look of

starvation in her young eyes was enough to melt a heart of stone. She kept her feet carefully on the path, for fear of touching the grass, for all around she saw the signs, "Keep off the grass," and she was afraid of trespassing.

At last a thought struck her. She could make herself look a little better! Putting her hand in her bosom, she pulled out the stockings the Bishop had given her. Taking off her ragged, rusty shoes, she carefully drew them on.

They were very different now from what they were when the Bishop took them off the tree and handed them to her. In each one there was a hole in the toe and a hole in the heel, and a number of other smaller holes all the way up, until they all joined at the top to make a ragged edge. It was not easy to get the torn stockings on, but she pulled them up tight, and tied a bit of string around them to keep them in place. Then she pulled them about so as to show the fewest holes, and dexterously drew the old shoes over them. She patted the stockings lovingly, as her thoughts

went back to that Christmas and the tree in the church, saying softly to herself: "And the Bishop said to me, 'God bless you, my child! Remember to keep yourself clean and pure to the end of your life.' And he looked up at that sugar boy with the shining wings on the top of the tree. Now I wonder who that was, and what he meant when he said, 'God bless you, my child'? Who is God? 'Remember to keep yourself clean to the end of your life.' I 'm ragged, but I guess I 'm clean. And pure, he said, too. I wonder what 'pure' means? I can't make it all out. I do wish grand people would say words poor, ragged little girls like me could make out; but I suppose the Bishop could n't do that. And I 'll never know what he wanted me to do. Well! I 'll try to find them boats Roy told me about."

She looked carefully around, and, watching her chance when the policeman's back was turned towards her, she passed behind him across the walk, and then sped away to the water's edge, still hiding behind trees and bushes.

When she got to the water, she was struck dumb with the beautiful scenes around her. On the top of the bank, on the drive, walked another policeman. She skipped behind a tree at the edge of the water. Then she saw ducks, swans, and geese, swimming right up to the land. She saw troops of children of all ages, children of the rich, beautiful, with plump cheeks and curly hair, and such lovely clothes. She saw little tots, with bonnets almost as large as themselves. They were joyous and happy, laughing and talking as they fed the feathered tribe. To Janet's horror, these favored children pulled grass by the handfuls, and fed the waterfowl, while the policemen talked to the nurses on the drive. Little Janet always had before her eyes the sign, "Keep off the grass."

A pretty child dropped a biscuit on the ground. Janet's hungry eyes were fixed upon it, but she dared not touch it, for fear of the dreaded policeman. The lovely child looked up and caught the glance; and, like children in their fraternal, natural way, she said, "Do you want it, little girl?"

Janet nodded, and the child picked it up and gave it to her, to feed the swans with.

Just then the nurse looked up from her novel and saw the child talking and handing something to this ragged little creature. She screamed, with horror in her voice, "Susie! Come here this instant! What are you doing with that ragged vagrant?" And to Janet: "Be off with you! I'll tell the policeman to take you away. Such vagabonds as you are not allowed in the park!"

Janet moved off with a full heart, wondering why she had not good clothes and pretty curls like those children, and why the nurses and every one drove her away from them. She was too weary and bewildered to think any more. She was near the boat-house, so, sitting down on the steps, she ate her biscuit, and dipped up water in her hand and drank it to quench her thirst. At the top of the bank she saw more policemen, but they were interested in more important things; so she passed on by the edge of the water until she came to a hill densely covered with trees and bushes. She

turned away from the drive and climbed the hill.

When she got to the top, she sat down on the ground and took off her stockings because the twigs caught in the holes and tripped her. She took one off slowly, and dropped it on the walk in a little heap, and then its mate in another little heap.

She was so exhausted that she crawled under a bush whose branches bent over and touched the ground. There, completely hidden, she felt safe. No people passing, no policemen, no one to call her ragged. This seemed a forsaken and lonely spot, apparently not worth guarding. So she soon fell asleep and forgot all her woes.

She slept for hours, and woke with a chill, wondering where she could be. It was some time before she could remember and tell how she got there. Then memory asserted itself, and all her misery rushed back upon her.

She sat up and crept out of her hiding-place, feeling that she was alone in the world. No

father, mother, sisters, or brothers, no Roy, no one in the wide, wide world.

Not only no one to love her, but no one even to know that she existed. Alone—all alone!

The throngs of people had left the park and gone to their homes, to eat, drink, and be merry. Little children were tucked snugly in their beds, and all the great city was at its ease. Janet was alone in the silence of the night. No sound was heard in the darkness. The night was cloudy, and she was cold, hungry, and miserable.

Her brain was weak from starvation, and she said in a whisper: "Yes, Bishop, I 've kept myself clean and pure. Your stockings are here, Bishop. There 's a hole in the toe, a hole in the heel, and holes all between the toe and the heel—but I 've got them yet."

She put on the old shoes, and seemed to be looking for something. Her braided hair had come loose, and fell like a veil about her. Her eyes were raised to the sky. The clouds parted and a bright star appeared.

She cried out with delight: "Oh, there you are! I 've been looking for you a long time. I was afraid you had forgotten me. You need not blink at me and twinkle so. I see you! I know you! I promised to see you to-night, so I 've come on this hill to be near you. You know what I want. Don't go away and leave me! It 's so dark, it frightens me. I 'm coming to you! You are the only friend I have.

I 'm coming ! Pretty star, stay !
I 'm coming ! Don't, oh don't go away.
Don't leave me alone, little star !
For I am down here, and you are so far."

Other children had been put to bed hours before, and told that angels would guard their beds through the night. The little ones thought they came down on ladders, from some place they were taught to call heaven. Janet knew nothing of warm beds, good food, or fine clothes—of heaven, or of angels that came down on ladders.

There was a rustling of the dried leaves on the bank, near the water. Janet held her breath in

fear, but the sound died away. Then she continued to whisper to the star, " You have talked to me so many nights, blinking at me through the window. I 'm coming! "

The child of ignorance, poverty, and despair stood on a stone to be nearer the star. The wind had risen, and wrapped the girl's black hair around her like a mantle. Her arms were stretched out to the star, and her eyes were fixed with unutterable love on the shining orb. And who shall say that there were no angels, waiting for her to ascend on high ?

Silently the child stood there, with clasped hands and wide, staring eyes, until the star went out, as she thought. Then she looked down into the water, and saw the star there, for the clouds had parted once more, and it seemed nearer to her than it did up above.

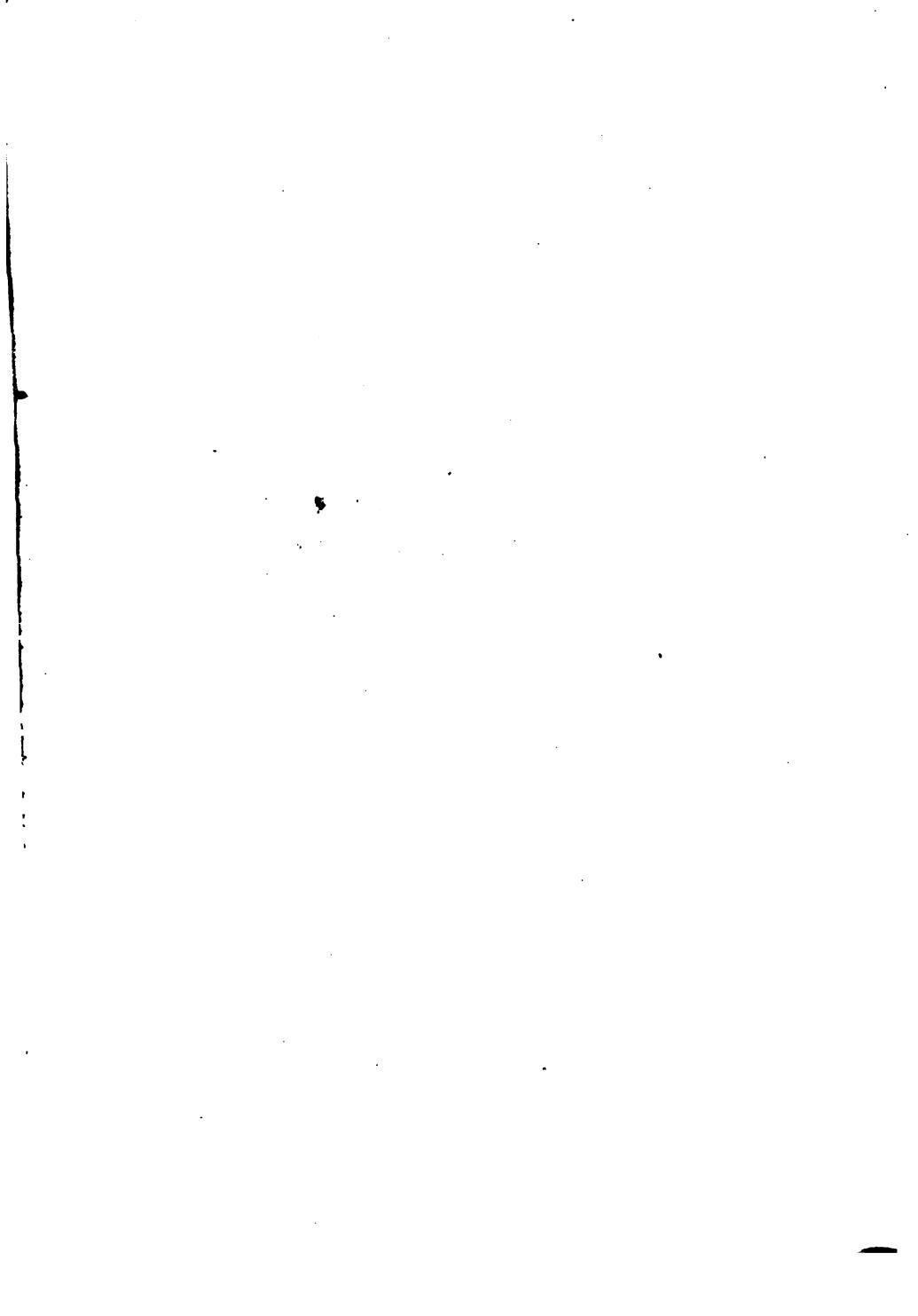
As the clouds rolled away, the silence of the night was broken by crackling twigs and loosened stones rolling down the steep side of the hill. A

splash in the water, which seemed to smile, as it rippled in circle after circle, until it again settled into stillness ; and the star shone brilliantly as ever, but told nothing of what it had seen.

Standing on the avenue after midnight was a watchful policeman. Out of the park came a mongrel dog, which ran up to him and with a piteous whine put his paws upon him and looked up into his face.

The policeman was a kindly man, and, taking some food from his pocket, he offered it to the dog, talking to him and patting him. But the dog refused all kindness for himself. That was not what he wanted. It seemed as if tears were almost in his eyes, and he spoke as plainly as a dog could speak, looking from the policeman over to the great lonely park. The officer more than half understood him, but he was not allowed to leave his beat. The dog continued his pleading until he saw that it was of no avail. He ran back into the park and up the hill to the top, where on the walk

he sniffed around the Bishop's stockings that lay where Janet had dropped them. Then, with a piteous cry, he sprang down the steep side of the hill, and the water once more seemed to smile as it gently rippled to the bank.



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